

# LEARNING FROM NORTH LAWNDALE

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PAST, PRESENT + FUTURE

EXHIBITION GUIDE



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Atrium Gallery, Chicago Architecture Foundation  
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CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

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*The Chicago Architecture Foundation wishes to thank our partners for their vision, inspiration, and ongoing guidance throughout the development of the "Learning from North Lawndale" exhibition.*

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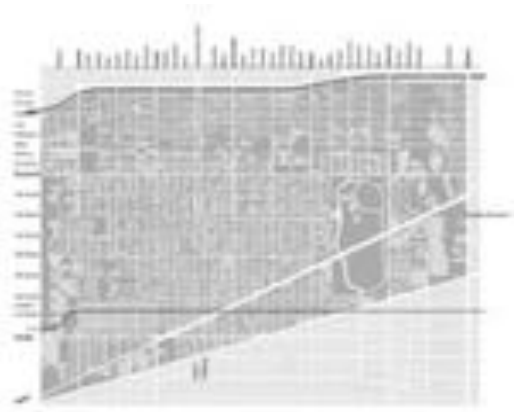
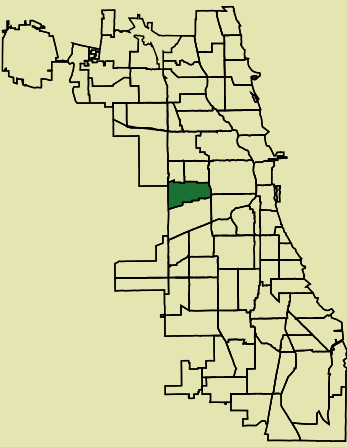
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## INTRODUCTION

**Left** Community area map of Chicago showing North Lawndale. **Right** North Lawndale's community boundaries: Cicero Ave. (west); Western Ave. (east); Eisenhower Expressway (north); and Cermak (south).

### Learning from North Lawndale: Past, Present and Future

What can we learn from North Lawndale? North Lawndale is a Chicago neighborhood of national historical significance that remains relatively unknown. North Lawndale's connection to well-known individuals and individual moments of notoriety have not added up to a distinctive identity. What do we discover by taking a closer look at this overlooked place?

The history of North Lawndale touches the larger history of the city of Chicago and of the United States in multiple, intriguing ways. To speak to a resident of North Lawndale of today or yesterday leads quickly to a focus on how the neighborhood came to be what it is and what it is becoming.

North Lawndale is a residential and industrial neighborhood five miles west of downtown Chicago. The neighborhood took shape in the aftermath of the 1871 Chicago fire and grew into one of the densest communities in the city. Once a middle class neighborhood, North Lawndale's revitalization has been sparked by community efforts after decades of economic decline.

North Lawndale is where Sears Roebuck and Co. had its world headquarters, where Golda Meir and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived, where Benny Goodman learned the

clarinet, where Cobra Records pumped out the West Side sound, a place once known as "Chicago Jerusalem" for its many synagogues, a place whose shifting population is a microcosm of U.S. urban history. The themes in the exhibition—Movements, Parks and Gardens, Industry, Institutions, Transportation, People, Movements, Lost Lawndale, Housing, Religion, and Entertainment—came from conversations with current and former residents of North Lawndale. Most of the themes could characterize any neighborhood, but for North Lawndale, they capture something unique. Many of the neighborhood's defining characteristics link it to national and international contexts.

The Chicago Architecture Foundation's exhibition is organized around these 10 themes, which investigate North Lawndale's past and present. In addition, the Chicago Architectural Club's Burnham Prize Competition explores the future of North Lawndale, as illustrated by the architectural proposals submitted by four finalists.

The lessons offered by North Lawndale's culture, its history and its architecture assets are complex; one should not expect a simple answer to any question about North Lawndale. There are still questions about North Lawndale that need answers and there are still questions that need to be asked.



## MOVEMENTS



**Left** Golda Meir (1898–1978) In 1917, Golda Meir moved to Chicago where she worked at the Douglass branch of the Chicago Public Library and attended Zionist meetings held in North Lawndale. Meir became the first and only female Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974.

**Right** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) Civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. based his 1966 Chicago campaign in North Lawndale. While living in an apartment at 1550 S. Hamlin Avenue, King led open housing marches in all-white neighborhoods and met with community leaders.

Two kinds of movements dominate North Lawndale's history: physical movement of people in and out of the neighborhood and political movements that prompted social activism and eventual reform. Both types of movements drew leaders to North Lawndale.

Around 1910, Eastern European Jews began arriving in North Lawndale in large numbers. By 1930, Chicago's Jewish population was the third largest in the world and most of its members resided in North Lawndale. Nearly half of the Jews who settled in North Lawndale were Russian. Their past experience of oppression made Chicago fertile ground for Zionism. Socialist labor activists formed a Chicago branch of the Poale Zion party, a forerunner of the Labor Zionist Alliance (now called Ameinu), in 1905, a year after its national founding. The labor Zionists believed that settling of a Jewish working class in Palestine was the only way that a Jewish state could be created.

Poale Zion and the Jewish Workers' Alliance jointly purchased the building at 3222 Douglas Boulevard for their headquarters, naming it the National Socialist Institute. The Institute hosted the Labor Zionists' national convention in 1927. In the summer of 1917, charis-

matic teenage activist Golda Meir, invited to North Lawndale from Milwaukee by local Zionist leaders, attended nightly Poale Zion meetings at the Institute. Meir later became the prime minister of Israel.

The African Americans who poured into North Lawndale in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century continued the neighborhood's tradition of social activism. The movement of African Americans to Chicago and its neighborhoods was part of a national migration, starting around World War I, surging again after World War II, and continuing to the 1970s. Migrating from both the deep South and Chicago's South Side, North Lawndale's new residents strained the capacity of the local housing stock, schools, and transportation.

Local activists focused on resolving pressing needs, seeding the grass roots from which larger issues of civil rights could be addressed. To confront problems caused by overcrowding and racial discrimination, North Lawndale's religious leaders, from Friendship Baptist Church and approximately 50 other churches, formed the West Side Federation in 1965. The group's efforts helped convince Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to bring his Freedom Movement to Chicago in 1966.

Dr. King centered his campaign on housing, vowing to “end the slums” in Chicago. To publicize the dramatic need for housing reform, King moved into a North Lawndale tenement. King and his colleagues took over a second tenement, appropriating rents and putting tenants to work rehabbing the structure. Although King’s efforts drew national attention, the campaign did not prompt immediate reform.

After Dr. King’s assassination in Memphis on April 4, 1968, African Americans expressed their grief and anger by taking to the streets. By the 5th, some marchers had turned to vandalism, looting, and arson, prompting Mayor Daley to call in the National Guard. In North Lawndale, buildings burned on Roosevelt Rd., Kedzie Ave., Pulaski Ave., and 16<sup>th</sup> St. The principal damage was to white-owned businesses.

Although triggered by King’s death, the riots, which ended on April 10<sup>th</sup>, were rooted in frustrations that had been building in African-American communities for years. Efforts to address those frustrations formed immediately in North Lawndale. In 1968, community activists Charles Baker, Monsignor Jack Egan, Rabbi Robert J. Marks, and Clyde Ross led the Contract Buyers League (CBL) to protest discriminatory real estate practices. The CBL initiated a payment strike on the West and South Sides, and renegotiated 500 contract sales, saving North Lawndale residents \$6 million.

The lack of black-owned businesses was another source of frustration. The Conservative Vice Lords, founded as a gang, became a not-for-profit corporation in 1967 and shifted its activities to business ventures and community service, working alongside the Black Panthers and other community groups in North Lawndale. Between 1968 and 1970, the Vice Lords obtained grants exceeding \$1 million in support of its business initiatives.

Community activism has taken a variety of forms in North Lawndale. A series of 1985 *Chicago Tribune* articles, the *American Millstone*, describing the neighborhood as one beyond hope, ran at the same time that local groups were taking action to improve the neighborhood and to challenge damaging, negative perceptions of North Lawndale. Since 1985, the nationally-recognized “Slum Busters” have transformed many vacant lots into gardens while advocating for other physical improvements for the neighborhood.

Most recently, North Lawndale has witnessed an expansion of youth-oriented community activism. UMOJA, a non-profit organization based at Manley Career Academy, and Free Spirit Media, which offers television production classes at North Lawndale College Prep High School, collaborated in 2001 to produce documentaries and oral histories on North Lawndale. The Green Youth Farm has provided instruction in organic farming to North Lawndale teenagers since 2004. Build Today, Lead Tomorrow works with internet radio station WNLO to develop communication skills among neighborhood youth. With the large youth population of the neighborhood, these programs provide crucial opportunities.



## INDUSTRY

**Left** An outdoor band concert held at the Sears garden in 1923. **Right** In 1940 Ryerson hosted an open house for 3,000 customers in its North Lawndale plant.



Growth and prosperity in North Lawndale historically were tied to the success of local manufacturing industries. The industrial corridors framing the neighborhood provided tens of thousands of jobs.

The McCormick Reaper Works was the first major manufacturer in the area, opening a large factory in 1873, just to the east of the neighborhood. The oldest continuing industry in North Lawndale is Joseph T. Ryerson and Son, a steel plant, established in 1903. In 1904, Western Electric Co. built their Hawthorne Works on North Lawndale's western edge. The Hawthorne Works became one of the largest manufacturing operations in the world, employing 25,000 workers. It is famous for Elton Mayo's pioneering time-motion studies in industrial psychology. Other businesses in the area included the Hallicrafters Co., the Midland Warehouse and Transfer Co., and several smaller manufacturers clustered near Roosevelt Road and Washtenaw Avenue.

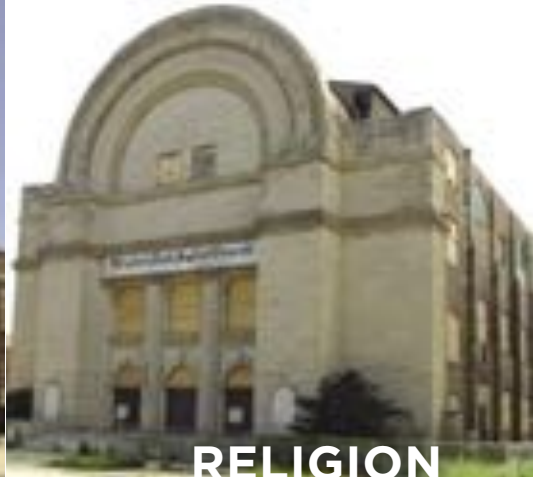
When Sears, Roebuck, and Co. located its world headquarters at Homan and Arthington Streets in 1906, North Lawndale gained its own nationally prominent enterprise. Sears was the nation's largest mail-order retailer, with 9,000 employees and annual sales nearing \$50 million. A city within a city, the complex featured a library, health clinic, and athletic fields. Elegant gardens served

as a popular retreat for Sears employees during work breaks and were the sites of local company-staged plays and concerts in the summer. The Sears facility handled all aspects of the business, from printing catalogues and manufacturing goods to processing orders and shipping merchandise by rail. The company connected North Lawndale to every corner of the nation.

Around 1970, North Lawndale's industrial base began to erode. The nationwide decline of manufacturing contributed to the loss of many jobs throughout Chicago. North Lawndale was especially hard hit. Between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s, the neighborhood lost roughly 80% of its manufacturing jobs. It was during this time that Sears moved its operations out of the neighborhood.

Today North Lawndale's two industrial corridors provide opportunities for new enterprises. These new industries tend to be smaller scale, with far fewer employees, many of whom do not live in the community. North Lawndale entrepreneurs have started businesses, such as honey-making and organic farming. The long-term challenge remains to provide adequate numbers of living-wage jobs for the residents of North Lawndale.

**Photos:** Both courtesy of Chicago History Museum



## RELIGION

**Left** Congregation Anshe Roumania / Stone Temple Baptist Church, 3622 W. Douglas Blvd., was designed by architects J. W. Cohn & Co. and completed in 1926. **Right** Anshe Kenesseth Israel Synagogue / Shepherd's Temple Missionary Baptist Church, 3411 W. Douglas Blvd., was designed by Aroner & Somers and completed in 1913.

North Lawndale's residents shape the architectural and social character of their neighborhood through their religious life. One way to tell the story of the community's transition from a predominately Jewish to a largely African-American presence is through the many churches and synagogues along North Lawndale's streets. Currently North Lawndale is home to more than 70 churches. Over the years, these congregations have met in a variety of locations, from private homes and storefronts to former synagogues and theaters.

Jews began settling in North Lawndale around 1910. Before long, the neighborhood was nicknamed "Chicago Jerusalem." They built synagogues, schools, health care facilities, and cultural centers in the vicinity of Douglas and Independence Boulevards. By 1944, Lawndale boasted 60 synagogues, half of Chicago's entire number. The Jews directed their religious practices outward into the neighborhood. On the Jewish High Holy Days, the boulevards filled with people parading to the synagogues in their best attire. On Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, over 25,000 worshippers typically gathered at the Douglas Park lagoon, emptying their pockets to "cast off" their sins.

Post-World War II economic and social dynamics made Chicago's Jewish and African-American populations highly mobile. North

Lawndale experienced successive waves of change. Most of North Lawndale's Jews moved to the suburbs or northern Chicago neighborhoods such as Rogers Park. African Americans soon filled the neighborhood, migrating into North Lawndale from southern states and from Chicago's crowded and evolving South Side.

African Americans moved into North Lawndale at a time of mounting social change. Neighborhood religious leaders rolled up their sleeves to work for better schools and housing. Reverend Shelvin Hall, Reverend J.R.G. Hargraves, Father Jack Egan, and others, all made their voices heard for change. This activist religious context paved the way for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to base his Chicago civil rights campaign in North Lawndale in 1966.

This tradition continues. Today, Reverends Michael Eddy, Wayne Gordon, Randall Harris, Charles Robinson, and Lincoln Scott are among those religious leaders dedicated to improving the lives of the people of North Lawndale.

**Photos:** Both courtesy of Anne Evans



## ENTERTAINMENT

**Left** Central Park Theatre, 3531 W. Roosevelt Road, was the first theater Chicago architectural firm that Rapp and Rapp designed for Balaban and Katz. **Right** "Magic Sam" Maghett performing in his home at a Newsweek interview.

Two entertainment innovations originated in North Lawndale: the luxury movie palace and the blues music known as the West Side sound.

### Theaters

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, North Lawndale's residents found amusement in the neighborhood's 11 theaters concentrated along Roosevelt Road. Entertainment entrepreneurs Balaban and Katz ushered in the era of the deluxe movie palace with the opening of the 1780-seat Central Park Theatre on October 27, 1917. From morning until midnight, the theater presented non-stop entertainment featuring live music, vaudeville, and the latest movies. Balaban and Katz treated moviegoers like royalty. Ushers sporting tuxedo-like uniforms escorted customers to their plush seats, while live organ music filled the luxurious, air-conditioned theater. The firm soon opened theaters throughout Chicago; for example, the Chicago Theatre on State Street and the Uptown Theatre on Broadway Avenue.

### Music

North Lawndale's vibrant musical landscape reflected its changing residential composition. Jazz prevailed during the years between the two World Wars, when most residents were Jews. Renowned clarinet player Benny Goodman, who spent his youth in North Lawndale, began his musical training at the Kehilath-Jacob Synagogue.

He made his professional debut at the Central Park Theatre in 1921.

In the late 1950s, African-American musicians in the area created a distinctive West Side sound. A younger generation of musicians, migrating from Mississippi to Chicago, reshaped the music of Chicago's South Side blues artists, such as Muddy Waters, Little Walter, and Howlin' Wolf. Emphasizing lead guitar solos influenced by B.B. King and singing styles strongly indebted to Gospel music, the West Side sound introduced a more urgent and energetic form of Chicago blues. The three musicians who pioneered the sound—Buddy Guy, Otis Rush, and "Magic Sam" Maghett—emerged as stars. They began their recording careers with Cobra Records on Roosevelt Road. The West Side sound filled clubs such as Big Bill Hill's Copa Cabana and the Congo Lounge, both on Roosevelt Road, and Ma Bea's, in nearby Garfield Park.

Despite its fame among blues fans, the West Side sound never achieved mainstream recognition. Most of North Lawndale's musicians from this era went on to record and play elsewhere, and they usually receive attention as part of the more well-known history of music on Chicago's South Side.

**Photos:** **Left** Theatre Historical Society of America  
**Right** Greg Roberts—Jazz Record Mart





## HOUSING

**Left** Greystones on the 3300 block of Flournoy Ave. **Right** Greystone on 1930 S. Springfield Ave.

One sight in North Lawndale sums up the history of residential life in the neighborhood: the greystone two-flat. North Lawndale contains the city's largest concentration of greystones, a type of building distinguished by limestone facades. Constructed chiefly between 1890 and 1920, Chicago's greystones surround the city's park and boulevard system. The elegant greystones and green spaces helped create desirable middle-class residential neighborhoods. Throughout North Lawndale, developers constructed two-flat, three-flat and single-family greystones and smaller, one-story "shoebox" greystones, structures unique to the neighborhood.

In the 1910s, housing issues emerged as North Lawndale's population shifted. Many Irish and German landlords refused to rent to Jews. This prompted wealthier Jews to become landlords by purchasing houses, lots, and even entire blocks. Jews also built large brick apartment buildings, which along with the greystones and brick two-flats, make up the bulk of the housing in North Lawndale today.

When African Americans began moving to the area in the 1940s, they too faced discrimination when they sought to buy homes whose sales prices were inflated by real estate agents dubbed "blockbusters." Another discriminatory real estate practice known as "contract buying" undermined African Americans who purchased houses on contract, at greatly inflated interest rates, from current

owners or realtors. As North Lawndale's population changed from predominantly Jewish to predominantly African American, landlords met rising demand in the already overcrowded neighborhood by dividing apartments into tiny kitchenette units.

Housing stock in North Lawndale deteriorated over a long period. In the Great Depression, a large number of buildings already showed signs of wear and tear. In 1958, city officials acknowledged that much of North Lawndale's residential landscape was in danger of becoming blighted. By the early 1960s, community leaders saw improved housing as the linchpin of North Lawndale's revitalization. The West Side Federation formed the Pyramidwest Development Corporation, one of the community's primary developers of housing from the late 1960s into the 80s.

Efforts to provide housing in North Lawndale have gathered momentum since 1990. The Lawndale Christian Development Corporation, HICA Corporation, Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, West Side Association Community Action, and Operation Brotherhood have increased homeownership and rental opportunities through housing rehabilitation and the construction of new housing. With support from Sears and the city, Charles Shaw developed Homan Square, 600 units of mixed-income housing on the former site of the Sears headquarters, a pivotal example of redevelopment in North Lawndale.

**Photos:** **Left** Anne Evans **Right** Julie Jaidinger



## LOST LAWNDALE

**Left** Vacant lots are a common sight throughout North Lawndale. **Right** Hebrew Theological College, 3450-58 W. Douglas Blvd. Years of vacancy and deferred maintenance account for the Hebrew Theological College's current condition.

North Lawndale is a standing archive of early 20<sup>th</sup> century American architecture: grand institutional buildings—synagogues and churches, theaters and schools—and stately greystone houses. For much of its history, North Lawndale was the second most densely populated neighborhood in Chicago. In recent decades, however, a dramatic reversal has taken place. It is now one of the more sparsely populated neighborhoods in the city, as evidenced by its numerous vacant lots that serve as a poignant reminder of what North Lawndale has lost. Gone from the landscape are the library where Golda Meir once worked, the Copa Cabana club where blues legends pioneered the West Side sound, and the homes where A. J. and Barney Balaban, Hyman Rickover, "Magic Sam" Maghett, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once lived.

There are many and varied causes for these losses. During the April 1968 riots following the assassination of Dr. King, fires destroyed numerous retail and business establishments along Roosevelt Road between Western Ave. and Pulaski Rd. The greatest loss of buildings, however, results from continuous lack of repair since the neighborhood was first built. A combination of forces—the Great Depression, World War II, the transitional population, overcrowding, the discriminatory practice of contract buying, the loss of manufacturing jobs—all

contributed to the deferred maintenance of the neighborhood's buildings.

Some of North Lawndale's structures deteriorated to a state beyond repair. In the 1980s, a city-wide "fast-track" demolition policy allowed city officials to raze buildings that they deemed structurally damaged or possible havens for criminal activity. As in many areas of the city, buildings in North Lawndale became magnets for the wrecking ball.

Today, the future of North Lawndale's architectural legacy remains uncertain. Without more public recognition of its history, the area risks further losses. Community members and preservationists are leading campaigns to save places of architectural and social significance that define the physical character of the area. The congregations of Stone Temple and House of Prayer are actively renovating their buildings. In addition, two synagogues and the former Hebrew Theological College on Douglas Boulevard are listed among the ten most "endangered" historic places in the state by Landmarks Illinois, a preservation advocacy group. The Historic Chicago Greystone Initiative®, launched in June 2006 by Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, is a new comprehensive effort to promote North Lawndale's architectural heritage, renew community pride, and assist residents in maintaining these treasured homes.

**Photos:** Left Real Estate Capital Institute Right Anne Evans



## PARKS & GARDENS

**Left** View of the northeast corner of Douglas Park in 1872. **Right** Green Youth Farm. 2006.

### Parks

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, speculative real estate developers give the name “Lawndale” to a marshy edge of Chicago to evoke an appealing location for city dwellers. Green spaces—formal parks and informal gardens—have defined the neighborhood over its entire history. North Lawndale’s earliest public landscapes were formal pleasure grounds created by the state of Illinois. Chicago architect William Le Baron Jenney designed three large parks linked by boulevards on the West Side of Chicago in 1871, including North Lawndale’s Douglas Park, named for U. S. Senator Stephen A. Douglas. When it opened in 1879, the park provided a retreat for quiet recreation, with its winding paths, rustic pavilions, and a lagoon with row boats. By the 1890s, Douglas Park boasted one of the city’s first public bathing facilities, along with a conservatory and outdoor gymnasium.

Landscape architect Jens Jensen, starting in 1905, added formal gardens featuring native plants and Prairie style architectural elements. He followed a similar approach in designing Franklin Park, the other city park in North Lawndale. By ringing playing fields with native plants and creating irregularly shaped pools with rocky ledges to resemble country swimming holes, Jensen’s 1914 plan for Franklin Park echoed the unspoiled Illinois landscape.

More active and varied forms of recreation prompted the reshaping of these parks.

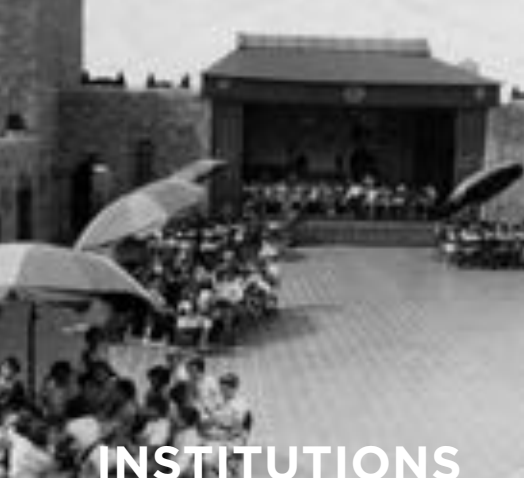
In 1928, architects Michaelson and Rogstad designed a field house for Douglas Park. In the 1990s, the Chicago Park District expanded the park’s arts programs, designating its field house as a cultural and community center.

### Gardens

Since the 1980s, a diverse patchwork of green spaces has appeared on North Lawndale’s map. These pocket gardens are sites of community activism, neighborhood beautification and youth education. In 1986, Gerald and Lorean Earles founded the “Slum Busters” to transform vacant lots into flower and vegetable gardens. Their efforts have inspired the creation of more than 40 gardens and attracted the support of community groups, local businesses, and civic organizations. The Earles earned a Presidential Service Award from President Clinton in 1993 for their leadership.

By 1996, community gardening had become pervasive, prompting the formation of the Lawndale Garden Committee. Today the Greening Committee, another gardening group, sponsors an annual tour of the neighborhood’s gardens. In 2005, the Chicago Botanic Garden created the Green Youth Farm, which teaches high school students to grow organic fruits, vegetables and flowers, and offers pathways to careers in horticulture, agriculture, and culinary arts.

**Photos:** Left Chicago Park District Special Collections Right Anne Evans



# INSTITUTIONS

**Left** The rooftop terrace of the Jewish People's Institute, 3500 Douglas Blvd., now known as Lawndale Community Academy. **Right** The Homan Square Community Center, 3517 W. Arthington St., is part of Homan Square, a larger redevelopment of the former Sears site.

New growth and renewed energy stimulate the current renaissance of North Lawndale's institutions. Schools, libraries, banks, hospitals, religious institutions, civic clubs, and cultural centers give the neighborhood stability and continuity. These organizations play a crucial role in the neighborhood's quality of life.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, North Lawndale's Jewish community centered their major institutions along Douglas Boulevard. The Jewish People's Institute, Hebrew Theological College, Herzl School and numerous synagogues created a vibrant public life. As the Jews moved out of North Lawndale, many buildings were adapted to new institutional uses. Several significant organizations remained in the area to serve the community's new residents. Some institutions remained continuous presences in the neighborhood, such as St. Anthony Hospital, founded in 1897.

Mt. Sinai Hospital's responsiveness to North Lawndale's changing needs have made it an enduring institutional leader in the neighborhood. One of the area's oldest institutions, Mt. Sinai opened its 60-bed facility in 1919 at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and California Avenue. More recently, it partnered with Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago to rehabilitate housing near the hospital, obtaining financial support from Ryerson Steel and Sears for the

project. Today Mt. Sinai is the community's largest employer with 2,000 staff.

Local residents helped launch the Community Bank of Lawndale in 1977 to provide the financial services essential for community development. North Lawndale's Cecil Butler, bank chairman, stepped in to fill a void created when the Sears Bank and Trust Co. moved out of the neighborhood. For many years, the Community Bank of Lawndale was the only bank in North Lawndale.

Since the mid 1980s, a number of new institutions have formed in North Lawndale. In addition to encouraging greater community leadership and involvement, many of these organizations have also built new community facilities. The Steans Family Foundation, which focuses solely on North Lawndale, has seeded and assisted numerous community-led organizations since 1986. The opening of the Homan Square Community Center in 2001 marked another turning point in the revitalization of North Lawndale's institutional network. The center is home to a number of community groups and part of the larger redevelopment of the former Sears site. Bouncing back from the dramatic loss of residents, jobs, and buildings that occurred in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, North Lawndale residents work through these and other institutions to voice the community's needs and to develop strategies for improvement.

**Photos:** Left Chicago History Museum Right Real Estate Capital Institute



# TRANSPORTATION & COMMERCE

Aerial view down Ogden Ave. looking northeast across North Lawndale. 2005.

Transportation provides North Lawndale's residents mobility and access to the world. The development of the community's local economy is closely tied to its transportation networks.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, a steady procession of peddlers enlivened North Lawndale's streets and alleys. Transporting their wares in knapsacks or horse-drawn wagons, vendors hawked everything from fruits and vegetables to coal and umbrellas. This street commerce evolved into thriving retail shopping on Roosevelt Road in the 1940s and 50s.

Roosevelt Road, Ogden Avenue, Pulaski Road and 16th Street have been the neighborhood's main retail and shopping streets. Ogden Avenue, the neighborhood's most celebrated road, began as an Indian trail. It links North Lawndale to the city's center. After it was surfaced with wood in 1848, it became known as the Southwest Plank Road. In 1926, Ogden Avenue was named part of Route 66, the national road connecting Chicago and Los Angeles. Over time, Ogden evolved into a center for many of Chicago's automotive businesses.

Trains began serving the neighborhood in 1864 with the extension of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy line. The Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railroad reached Douglas Park in stages between 1896

and 1907. The same tracks now serve the community as part of the Chicago Transit Authority system. Today the 54/Cermak Line operates between downtown and North Lawndale. On a larger scale, railroads and highways supported industry and commerce, connecting North Lawndale to the nation's economy. Freight trains and trucks delivered raw materials to businesses, such as Ryerson's steel mills and the Sears plant, and carried away finished goods.

The 1968 riots devastated retail businesses and services in the area. Signs of commercial revitalization began to appear in the mid-1990s. A new shopping plaza, opened in 1998, features a supermarket and movie theater. New franchises have opened in the area, seeding the possibilities for further commercial growth.

Photo: Real Estate Capital Institute



## PEOPLE

**Left** Singer and heavy-weight boxer Ernie Terrell with his sister Jean (center), who replaced Diane Ross in the Supremes, and her fellow Supremes. **Right** Clarinetist Benny Goodman made his professional debut at Central Park Theatre.

People have always been North Lawndale's greatest resource. Past and present residents of North Lawndale form an impressive group of celebrated cultural figures, social reformers, and political activists. In 1917, a young Golda Meir contributed to a fledgling labor Zionist movement headquartered in the neighborhood. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. based his Chicago civil rights and fair housing campaign in North Lawndale in 1966. The neighborhood has nurtured the creativity of musicians Benny Goodman and Buddy Guy, writers John Fountain, Meyer Levin and Irv Kupcinec, and actress Kim Novak. On Roosevelt Road, Balaban and Katz launched their theater empire in 1917, while Eli Toscano began Cobra Records in 1957. Businessman and philanthropist John G. Shedd, Admiral Hyman Rickover, heavyweight boxer and singer Ernie Terrell, and "Slum Busters"



Lorean and Gerald Earles have all called North Lawndale home.

These people are known all over the world, but their connections to North Lawndale are not. Despite its rich history, North Lawndale is not recognized for the part it has played in the lives of so many well-known figures. Celebrating their contributions to the nation's social, political and cultural life can instill community pride and foster awareness of North Lawndale's unique place in history. Moreover, restoring an awareness of the affiliation of these leaders and their achievements to the neighborhood allows North Lawndale to reclaim its place in the nation's history.

**Photos:** Top left Lawndale Heritage Photo Archive—Courtesy Rosie Nowlin and Ernie Terrell right Chicago History Museum Bottom clockwise from top left Theatre Historical Society of America; Lawndale Heritage Photo Archive—courtesy of Cedric Pope; Greg Roberts—Jazz Record Mart

**Top Left** AJ and Barney Balaban, two of the founders of Balaban and Katz. **Bottom Left** Otis Rush at RCA for Vanguard. **Right** Lorean and Gerald Earles founders of the Slum Busters.





# BURNHAM PRIZE COMPETITION

## Defining the Urban Neighborhood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The Chicago Architectural Club chose North Lawndale as the focus of the 2006 Burnham Prize Design Competition. The neighborhood has a strong architectural history, committed residents, and numerous city-owned vacant lots, all of which inspire new thinking about urbanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Given these resources—what are the patterns, landmarks, and institutions that define an urban neighborhood today? How can North Lawndale become a model for other communities across the country?

Five finalists were selected in the first phase of the two-part design competition. Jury chair and keynote speaker, Walter Hood, landscape architect and professor, University of California, Berkeley, spoke on behalf of the first jury, urging the finalists to conduct “fine grain” site research to enrich their proposals. A neighborhood symposium, and two local exhibitions gave finalists and residents several opportunities to interact.

The second jury, including North Lawndale residents and neighborhood activists, local architects, and a planner from the City of Chicago, convened in August 2006. The four finalists who submitted proposals for the second jury included: Man-Chun Chuang, “Winter Harvest Garden;” Digital DOA “Urban Ecotone;” Kim Nigro, “Outside the Box;” and Shinya Uehara and Chantelle Brewer, “Greenhouse Green House.”

The jury noted that all the finalists showed a strong interest in “green” environmental solutions designed to enhance the quality of life for North Lawndale residents. They also recognized the importance of the neighborhood’s historic architectural fabric and the need to create local jobs.

The jury selected Kim Nigro’s “Outside the Box,” as the 2006 Burnham Prize winner. Nigro’s proposal features multi-family housing that uses manufactured and pre-fabricated housing construction technology. She proposes locating the manufacturing facilities in North Lawndale, with union-level job training for North Lawndale residents.

In Nigro’s proposal, the extended family may share the house, but live in separate units, or the structure can be a single-family home. Jurors noted that this pattern is typical of North Lawndale residents, who often live near their extended families. The jury also praised the modern design and building technology, noting that the scale and diverse facades complement the existing greystones, while the technology keeps the housing affordable. Citing the numerous benefits to North Lawndale, the jury strongly recommended this proposal as a model for the City as it considers future development in North Lawndale.

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# Atrium Gallery—Exhibition Layout

